


Evaluation of the Claim that Islam Frightens People with Eternal Pain

Müfit Selim Saruhan 

Department of Islamic Philosophy, Faculty of Divinity, Ankara University, Ankara, Türkiye

✉ saruhan@ankara.edu.tr

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Abstract

There are various prejudices in society regarding the Islamic concepts of faith. These prejudices are easily eliminated when faced with true knowledge and basic religious sources. Allegations often represent uninformed judgment. The main goal of this article is to clarify a frequently asked question about Islamic beliefs regarding the afterlife. According to some, this question has recently caused young people to break away from faith. To what extent can we embrace a religion that predicts eternal torment? In this article, we draw attention to these prejudices and encourage readers to investigate the intellectual depth of Islam based on knowledge. Humans have great potential. However, a person can achieve happiness in both the world and the hereafter by revealing the potential given to him from birth through his/her choices and behaviors. A person can reveal his existing talent in the best and most accurate way by reflecting on the meanings of the names of his Lord, who created him, in his life and living in accordance with them. Prejudices regarding Islamic religion's understanding of the afterlife have come to the fore on social media and books. In this article, we discuss the claim about Islam that "it scares us with eternal torment." Does Islam really scare people with punishments? Are people attached to Islam out of fear, as claimed? Does the Holy Quran suppress questioning? Or does this encourage it? It is possible to find many pros and consensuses in the history of commentary and theology regarding whether punishment is eternal. While evaluating these views, we must be responsible for ensuring and filtering whether they conform to the spirit and basic goals of the Holy Quran and Hadiths. The fact that the names of forgiving, merciful, and merciful are among the beautiful Names of Allah (Al-Asma Al-Husna), but the names of the one who punishes, the one who is angry, and the one who torments are excluded, should be accepted as evidence that the punishment



will not be eternal. Mercy is an ancient attribute that cannot be separated from the essence of Allah.

Keywords: *Hell; Hereafter; Justice; Knowledge; Mercy; Paradise; Torture*

INTRODUCTION

On The Secret of Life

The fate shared by all living beings and humans concerns death and the afterlife, which are common topics in both philosophy and religion. In an existence where death is not at stake, discussions about what function philosophy and religion would entail will also lead to interesting debates. Philosophy and religion interpret life, death, and the afterlife within their own domains of knowledge as two systems that rise above a mystery (Bautista et al., 2017; Lawrence-Hart & Deezia, 2023; Liquin et al., 2020).

Humans are the most distinguished creatures in the world: moving, thinking, laughing, crying, asking questions, and ultimately, dying humans. With death, a man can no longer move, think, laugh, cry, or ask questions. Humans begin to understand and describe their surroundings after becoming conscious of their existence (Mashour & Alkire, 2014; Shanta, 2015; Stewart, 2022). In a sense, a man spends his life by describing, evaluating, and concluding what he sees. As long as he gives meaning to what he sees and feels, he feels the peace of existence. Otherwise, he shows discord, first with his own world and then with his surroundings, through dilemmas and struggles. Life and its nature are among the problems that humans primarily try to solve. Throughout history, many views have been proposed to explain life.

Can religion, philosophy, science, and even mythology contain the premises that will satisfy all our curiosities? Can we obtain necessary knowledge from them? Does the moment we ask why we live and the meaning and value of that moment have any significance? Will the system or consciousness that prompts us to ask this question

inform us? Do we have such possibilities? When life, existence, and the functioning of the universe are investigated within all their systematicity, there have also been those in the history of humanity who argued that everything was based on coincidence, purposelessness, and godlessness, in addition to relying on and explaining a supreme and transcendent power.

The exploration of life and death and what happens afterward isn't limited to a religious viewpoint; it's a universal exploration that has intrigued people across different societies and periods for ages. Within the faith tradition, specifically, these concepts are deeply intertwined with the idea of purpose and the ethical code that shapes followers' actions. The interpretations found in texts, like the Qur'an and the teachings attributed to Prophet Muhammad, weave together a narrative about what awaits individuals after death, highlighting both the potential rewards as well as consequences awaiting them. In contrast, to focusing on punishment and the idea of suffering as a distinctive feature in Islamic teachings has resulted in misunderstandings that critics often use to claim that these beliefs are meant to manipulate and scare followers into compliance with certain rules and beliefs. These critiques have become more prevalent in conversations due to how they are influenced by media representations and misunderstandings that fail to consider the scope of Islamic theology that fundamentally highlights kindness, understanding, and the act of pardoning as essential aspects of the divine nature.

This research aims to explore the misunderstandings and offer insight into Islamic beliefs about life after death. To achieve this goal, the article examines texts, historical explanations, and modern viewpoints. It endeavors to shed light on whether Islam instills fear of everlasting suffering in individuals or if this perception arises from readings and misconstrued explanations of holy scriptures. The

objective is to inspire readers. Those not well versed in principles. To delve into the intellectual and spiritual richness of the religion bypassing surface-level judgments. Exploring these concepts is essential not to rectify misunderstandings but to encourage a well-rounded conversation about how Islam addresses profound existential queries that have captivated people for generations. This research ultimately emphasizes the significance of being open-minded when it comes to beliefs and pursuing wisdom that resonates with the core values of compassion and direction embedded in the heritage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Immortality and Related Concepts

To understand the concept of infinity, three aspects must be considered: the endless continuity of the existence of time, infinity from the beginning, and an understanding of time, sometimes transcending it. The first aspect, in the context of "time" in ordinary conversation, involves people assuming that when speaking about the past to infinity, they are generally talking about an unlimited duration, assuming it continues indefinitely.

In Western sources, the concept of infinity is expressed as "Eternal." It is derived from the Latin words "aeternus" and "aluiternus," shortened from "aevism." The English words "ever" and "aye" (meaning always, forever) are derived from this root. All adjectives that convey the same meaning clearly indicate the perpetuation of existence. However, for the concept of the continuity of existence in absolute philosophical terms, the words "Eternal," "Infinite," "Everlasting," and "Timelessness" are used. The word used for human immortality is "Immortality" (Hick, 1989). When we refer to human immortality, it is evident that humans are mortal. There is no escape from death for any living being. However, when we talk about immortality, we mean whether humans can attain a type of life

after death that is freer and more powerful without pain or separation (Fischer, 2022; Sallnow et al., 2022).

There are various prejudices in the society regarding Islam. These prejudices are easily eliminated when faced with true knowledge and basic religious sources. Allegations often represent uninformed judgment. In this article, we draw attention to these prejudices and encourage the reader to investigate the intellectual depth of Islam based on knowledge. Islam is not a religion that disrespects people and imposes orders and prohibitions on people without empathy. The main goal of Islam is to remind people to stay away from things that harm their mental and physical health to discover their own talents. Islam touches people, relieves their confusion and needs, and lifts the burdens that burden them. Islam is a school of values and guidance in which joy and peace are reflected from the individual to the family and from the family to society. It is a harbor where we are safe from all our fears and anxieties. The basic requirement of a human being is trust. Seeking and finding trust and giving it the greatest peace of human existence.

Why we live, where we come from, and where we are going, what we should do, we wonder how we can know. We find the best answers to all these questions in the Holy Quran. In terms of our belief system, worldly life has a moral value. Worldly life is a field of values in which man will attain immortality. The basic call of the Holy Quran is to live our lives away from prejudices, based on inquiry, research, and observation (Holy Quran Surah Al Mulk [67] Verse 4).

The Holy Quran invites us to consider the source and value of our knowledge. The Holy Quran draws attention to experiential and sensory knowledge: As humans, acting with thought, observation (Surah Al Nahl [16] Verse 78), and research prevents us from prejudice and wrong behavior, and we meet with justice and mercy in our decisions and actions (Surah Al Baqarah [2] 171). The verse "O Lord,

increase my knowledge” (Surah Taha [20] Verse 14) in the Holy Quran is a thought-provoking emphasis on the fact that all human actions in the universe are based on knowledge. Knowledge is the door to enlightenment, meaning, and peace. It would be a healthier approach to learn about a religion that prioritizes knowledge from its own sources. This verse guides us not to surrender to hearsay.

Rosenthal (2006) describes Islam as an information civilization with the value it attaches to information and the scientific products it produces. Izutsu, a Japanese scientist, shows the reader the depth of concepts of the Holy Quran in his work entitled *God and Man in the Quran*. According to him, the relationship between God and man relates to justice and goodness. One must respond morally to this (Izutsu, 2002b, 2002a). However, on social media, superficial, hasty, ideological, and unscientific criticisms of Islamic values have been made, with the attitude of beating the vinedresser rather than eating grapes about Islam. When these contents are examined, the excessively satirical environment on social media increases. Just as belief is based on research or is initially based on imitation, disbelief is mainly based on imitation.

When asked why you are an atheist, someone might answer because women’s rights in Islam are not ideal or because God punishes people and scares them. Disbelief is proposed in the form of. Is this the truth of the matter? Judging without understanding takes us away from reality. We cannot gain a clear view of the real causes of problems and blockages in practical life unless we separate traditional and cultural accumulations from religious ones.

When we examine these unscientific hate speeches, we observe hearsay opinions rather than those of educated people. You will encounter Western intellectuals researching Islam worldwide. There is scientific when language is respectful and measured. Excessive satire and hasty judgments that are prejudiced from the outside

constitute hate speech. The best way to understand and evaluate ourselves is to determine how we look from the outside. The most objective views were those from the outside. The majority of outside views of Islam give Islam and its principles the respect they deserve. We can see that all non-Muslim Western intellectuals have respectful and measured views. On the other hand, less-educated people who grew up in Muslim geography and were under the propaganda of cultural imperialism also brought superficial criticism. Each individual's mind is a separate universe. The boundaries, judgments, and values of the universe vary from person to person. What determines human actions, whether positive or negative, is the accumulation of values in the mind. With accumulated experience gained in the outside world, a person creates mental evaluations, such as right, wrong, good, and bad. The Holy Quran refers to this fact as follows: "And they esteem not Allah as He hath the right to be esteemed." (Surah Az Zumer [39] Verse 67)

METHOD

In this study, the topics of religion, theology, and philosophy were approached using inductive and deductive methodologies. The deductive scientific literature on Islamic thought underwent a deconstructive analysis. We aimed to scrutinize the definitions of key concepts in Islamic thought found in dictionaries and trace their common underlying meanings. By delving into classical sources of the Qur'an, we explored the debates and diversity of these concepts.

Expanding on the deductive analysis groundwork outlined in this research study involves using qualitative content analysis to break down the stories found in traditional and modern Islamic theological texts. A thorough examination of Tafsir (interpretation of the Quran), Hadith literature (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad), and scholarly interpretations was undertaken to encompass a range of

perspectives on the concept of punishment and compassion. Through organizing these viewpoints, the study uncovers common themes and differences that shed light on the broader theological conversation in this field. Particular focus was placed on understanding the meaning behind verses frequently referenced when discussing punishment to shed light on how these interpretations relate to or differ from the core principles of mercy, forgiveness, and guidance that are fundamental to Islamic teachings. The study takes an approach to keep the analysis grounded in respected Islamic scholarship while also considering the cultural and historical backgrounds that influence modern interpretations.

In addition to connecting theology with how the public perceives it better, the research includes looking at popular literature and social media discussions related to how Islam presents life after death as a way to compare them and understand misconceptions that commonly arise from interpretations of Qur'an verses and external critiques impacting views of Islamic beliefs. The study evaluates how these misunderstandings develop and continue by comparing them with information found in original religious texts. The study also involves speaking with scholars to gain perspectives on current theological interpretations and how these interpretations can help alleviate the worries of younger individuals dealing with fear-driven stories of belief systems. This comprehensive research methodology strives to provide a comprehension of the matter by combining conventional scholarly thoroughness with present-day significance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Allah's Way of Treating All the World is Mercy

Let us examine together the claim that Islam “frightens us with eternal torment.” Does Islam really scare people with punishment? Are people attached to Islam out of fear, as claimed? Does the Holy Quran

suppress questioning? Or does it encourage it? First, let us state this and develop our further reading of this subject. Thinking about the concept of time in the Holy Quran provides us with new insights. Among the many words expressing time in the Holy Quran, we should consider words such as *'ashr, dahr, qarn, hin, khuld, abad, and samed*. In one verse, Almighty Allah says: "Day with Allah is as a thousand years of what ye reckon" (Surah Al Hijj [42] Verse 47; Al Hadîd [57] Verse 14; Al-Înfitâr [82] Verse 6).

This verse demonstrates the relativity of the concept of time. This shows that there is another time that goes beyond the time system that we are accustomed to. It is based on the words "*hulud*" and "*ebed*" in the Holy Quran. However, there are various difficulties in reaching such a conclusion based solely on these two words. Because *hulûd* in the dictionary means "waiting in a place for a long time without being changed." *Ebed* is not used in the sense of "eternity" but in the sense of "long time" (Abdülbâkî, 2007; Abrahamov, 2002; Al-Zamakhshârî, 2009; Et-Tehânevi, 1996).

While calling people to the right path and reminding them of their responsibilities, the main goal of the Holy Quran was to keep people away from evil. It is the result of a person's free will that he/she chooses action and bears the consequences. In Islam, orders and prohibitions are basic guarantees of physical and mental health. Although there is no doubt that Allah is the possessor of grace, generosity, and forgiveness, the basic conclusion in all divine books is that the recompense for good and evil is a requirement of divine justice and wisdom (Surah Luqmân [31] Verse 33). Unless they have a mental disability, people have a common sense, awareness of obligation and responsibility, will, and power to distinguish between good and evil, despite their individual differences. One of the most emphasized points in the Holy Quran is that prophets were sent as bringers of good news and warnings. For those deprived of

knowledge and information for various reasons, there is no punishment in the afterlife.

However, it is worth remembering that it is possible to find many pro and con opinions in the history of commentary and theology about whether punishment is eternal. While evaluating these views, we must be responsible for ensuring and filtering whether these views conform to the spirit and basic goals of the Holy Quran and Hadiths. The fact that the names of the forgiving, the merciful, and the merciful are among the beautiful names of Allah (the Names of Allah), but the names of the one who punishes, the one who is angry, and the one who torments are excluded should be accepted as evidence that the punishment will not be eternal. Mercy is an ancient and eternal attribute that cannot be separated from the essence of Allah. Torment, on the other hand, is not one of His attributes and names, but a result of His actions related to the attribute of justice, which repays the evil done by His servants.

The continuity of eternal divine names and attributes is essential. Since punishment is “evil,” it cannot be attributed to Allah. Allah’s essence and attributes have the feature of absolute perfection, and His actions are only good. Because divine wrath, which is the basis of torment, is not an essential attribute that cannot be separated from Allah, it is not necessary for torment to be continuous. Therefore, neither the wrath nor the torment that results from it is essential and temporary, whereas mercy is permanent because it is an essential divine attribute. Eternal torment is against divine justice. The punishment for sins committed in a short life must also be finite. While Allah commanded His servants that the punishments they would inflict should be equal to the crimes and forbade them to go to extremes in punishment, His punishment for those who committed crimes in this worldly life, which covers a very short time compared to eternity, with an endless torment is not satisfactory in terms of the

information provided to us by the Holy Quran and the Sunnah (Al-Issa et al., 2021; Pagani, 2016; Thomassen, 2009).

Human has the ability to carry great potential. However, a person can achieve happiness in both this world and the hereafter by revealing the potential given to him from birth through his choices and behaviors. A person can reveal his existing talents in the best and most accurate way by reflecting the meanings of the names of his Lord, who created him, into his life and living in accordance with them. A person who encounters the verses of the Holy Quran intensely encounters a call for faith and action. In this respect, when viewed from the field of moral philosophy, the Holy Quran developed the principle on which our behaviors and actions are based on the idea of responsibility. The verses stating that people will not be left alone and that everyone will shape their lives according to their own efforts refer to the perception of “being individual and special” not being abandoned for a moment. We cannot live irresponsibly worldwide. As a free being, man is responsible for all his actions.

The fact that God imposes responsibility on individuals shows a strong emphasis on freedom given to us. Statements that the choice to believe or not to believe is in one’s hands are that the decisions and responsibilities we take are our own choices and within the realm of freedom. The realization of human individuality is the process of responsibility, freedom, perfection, and maturation based on these two foundations. Islam is a religion of free will and happiness. The religion of Islam calls people a consistent and realistic approach. It provides people with the joy of life. It instills a sense of responsibility. It emphasizes that we look at life with hope. It gives us good news that we can achieve great opportunities both in this world and the hereafter. Because it is a religion of balance, it provides warnings and good news to prevent people from making mistakes (Ajmain et al., 2022; Dar, 2013; M. M. ul H. Shah et al., 2021; Shakir, 2018).

This means that Islam prioritizes and conditions reason, free will, and happiness (Amiruddin et al., 2021; Fadl, 2014). Throughout history, it has been observed that people often shape and interpret religion according to their interests and understanding. How correct is it to be angry with the Almighty Creator for people's comments? The most important emphasis of this definition is happiness. The descriptions of heaven and hell in the Quran are educational methods for people to review their behavior in the name of goodness and beauty. God's rewards and punishments are a part of human education. Illustrations and examples in the verses are intended to activate people's concrete understanding. This world is the abode of wisdom and is hereafter the abode of power. In the afterlife, which is the abode of power, there will be no matter what we know it in the world. In this respect, we have to consider the descriptions of the Quran from a purposeful perspective, within the framework of the data of the science of psychology and the self-destruction of man's passions

We will be rewarded for all our good and evil deeds, both in this world and hereafter (Mun'im et al., 2020; Qaddumi, 2012). While conscience is the judgment of our moral flaws, in law, it is the regulator of our relations with others and the dispenser of justice. It is a requirement of justice that the consequences of the good and evil we produce with our own free will be seen both in this world and the hereafter. The Holy Quran conveys its message based on what people are familiar with in their daily lives. It should be noted that the first addressees of the Holy Quran lived in a scorching hot and desert environment. Their longing: While their fears were coolness, shade, gardens, and rivers, they were hot and scorching heat. In this respect, peace of heaven describes an environment in which there is no fear, worry, or anxiety. The peace when we do good is a slice of heaven.

When we do evil, when we are envious and arrogant, we experience fire within us and dissatisfaction that cannot be fooled by water.

It should not be forgotten that the Holy Quran used these means of expression in the most perfect way while presenting divine messages to a society where the taste of poetry and literary arts were skillfully used (Musta'in, 2018; Sperl, 2020). To attract the attention of interlocutors, it combined appeals to both logic and heart by using language in its outward and inward integrity. "And We never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make (the message) clear for them" (Surah Ibrahim [14] Verse 4). Every society has a language. There is an inextricable bond between society and languages. In a verse in the Surah Ar-Rum, the differences in colors and languages are evidence of the existence of Allah (Surah Ar Rum [30] Verse 22).

According to Zamakhshari (d. 1144), things that exceed our experience are defined with such analogies based on what we see and know through experience. The fruits of this world and the fruits of heaven are described in a similar way in the Holy Quran because people pay more attention to things that they are familiar with and know closely (Al-Zamakhshārī, 2009). Thus, perhaps what the divine system is trying to convey is that life is the essence and death is a temporary interruption, cessation, or disruption. Is it necessary for the human body to be finite? Is there an energy or soul in humans that makes them exist through emotions? Or will we only live immortal lives with the soul? It can be easily said that two aspects are emphasized the most in the Quran. The unity of Allah (not associating anything with Him, reaching an unshakable unity within ourselves, and avoiding duality), and on the other hand, that death is not the end.

In the Quran, it is frequently emphasized that death is not the end, but rather a beginning, a transition point. The pre-Islamic era is referred to as "*jahiliyyah*," meaning ignorance or the dark period.

During this time, people were ignorant of themselves and their abilities (Başci, 2021; Bölükbaşı, 2019). They did not know what they knew or what they needed to do. They believed that existence was aimless and did not attribute any meaning or value to life. In this period, known as the era of ignorance or “jahiliyyah,” which was not enlightened by the revelation of the Quran, there was no interest in the concept of afterlife. The people of that time were concerned only with death itself but not with what came after death. According to this understanding, death was seen as nothing more than a departing soul or decaying body of dust and clay. A poem expressing this sentiment illustrates their true understanding.

While Islam’s definition of religion brings us together with happiness and free will, claiming that God threatens us with eternal torment shows that we cannot look at religious text in its essentials (Armayanto et al., 2023; Rizvi & Hossain, 2017; Sumbulah, 2018). He described his morality, style of behavior, and the way he paints existence with mercy. Mercy is the fundamental principle behind a person’s morality/behavior. The God of the Holy Quran presents himself with justice, common sense, fairness and purity. Just as picking up a fallen child from the ground is a help for a parent, sometimes not picking it up is a help to strengthen the child. This means that the Holy Quran reminds us of punishment to warn man’s fragile and often evil-minded self, but this emphasis is explained with concrete examples in terms of deterrence due to the weakness of the abstract perception of human nature.

Now let us think together: if a Creator describes himself with Mercy and, in a sense, states that the absolute style of his behavior is Mercy, what value do fragmentary perceptions and claims have? Allah is the best of the judges and never oppresses them. He never treated people unfairly. People in their own choices. He will set the scales of justice on the day of judgment (Surah Al An’am [6] Verse 57;

Yunus [51] Verse 109; An Nisa [34] Verse 40). Divine punishment is the reward for evil. Since Allah is very loving, very forgiving, and merciful, punishments may be less, but they will not be more than what you deserve. "God is generous and rich" (Surah Az Zümer [39] Verse 53; Al An'am [6] Verse 160). "Allah has gathered all the goodness in Himself and is far from evil" (Surah Al Haşr [59] Verse 23).

Heavenly bliss is neither the final stage for good people, nor is it the final stage for sinners in hell. Just as we experience the brightness of sunlight and the full moon in the evening and at night, everyone will move forward toward their Lord and eventually pay their penances. The following hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) leads us to very deep thoughts: "Allah has divided His mercy into a hundred parts. He kept ninety-nine pieces of it in His presence and sent one of them down to earth. Beings take pity over each other because of this little mercy. Animals even lift their feet out of fear that their babies will step on them" (Sahih Al-Bukhārī No. 600). Revelation, with its uniqueness that we encounter in the person of Muhammad, presents us with a unique God, beyond all human weaknesses and whims. God's anger and love are metaphorical expressions of the Quran. As Samed, who we often repeat in Surah Ikhlās, he does not need anything. Some motivations drive people to take action, such as fear and hope. A person discovers their own potential and power of existence during these emotions. Allah invites people to the path of goodness, beauty, and truth through encouraging expressions

CONCLUSION

From today's perspective, the things introduced by the Holy Quran, which once again motivates a Muslim to believe in determination in the revelation that ended in 632 with all its purity, simplicity, and credibility, are sometimes immanent/infuse, "We are

closer to him and his jugular vein” (Surah Qaf [50] Verse 16), but He is always a transcendent creator “Nothing is like Him and He alone is, He hears everything, sees everything” (Surah Ash Shu’ara [42] Verse 11]. As Muslims, we began our work with Bismillah. The two main emphasizes in the Bismillah is Rahman and Rahim. Rahman and Rahim describe active, continuous love that has been transformed from theory into practice. It encompasses the world, afterlife, and all universes.

Salam is the beautiful name of Allah (Surah Al Hashr [59] Verse 23). Allah; It is the source of well-being and peace. Salam has the same semantic commonality as the word Islam. Salam states that Allah is free from shame, flaws, and shortcomings and that He is the source of security, tranquility, salvation, health, peace, comfort, and good results. The most practical meaning and value of Allah’s name Salam for people is that it makes peace and tranquility prevail on Earth through human behavior. In the Holy Quran, the name of eternal heaven is Darussalam, which refers to the land of peace. When entering heaven, people are greeted by Allah with greetings, and they greet each other in heaven as well (Surah Yaseen [36] Verse 58).

The Holy Quran Offers the Man of the Joy of Life. A mentality that frustrates people with life and work restricts their belief in freedom. This is what people do to make the world meaningful. A person is valuable if he works, produces, and shares. A person can only be happy by expressing and defining himself or herself. The Holy Quran foresees the freedom of belief within the limits of human freedom. A person who knows, desires, and implements the highest good will be happy. A person who thinks, tries to read the universe, and is aware of the natural forces and their functioning in the universe must know his power and limitations.

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Informed Consent Statement

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Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding authors.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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